

REMARKS

Claims 1-70 are pending in the application. In the Office Action of March 8, 2002, the Examiner rejected claims 1-70 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Storey (U.S. Patent No. 5,774,870) in view of the article titled "Sportsline USA" (the "CBS Sportsline Reference"). In response, Applicants have amended claims 1-70 to more clearly point and distinctly claim their invention. Applicants reserve the right to pursue the subject matter of the original claims in this application and in other applications. No new matter has been added. Reconsideration and further examination are respectfully requested.

Pending independent claims 1, 18 and 35 have been amended to reflect applicants' invention of a webpage that includes a plurality of links (e.g., hyperlinks), wherein each of the links may have an associated point value. Different links may have different point values and the webpage may include links that do not have associated point values. By clicking or otherwise accessing one of the links, a user is awarded one or more points corresponding to the point value associated with the link. The user is then given one or more entries in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.

Neither the Storey patent or the CBS Sportsline reference disclose such a system, method or computer code. More particularly, the Storey patent discloses an award redemption program wherein a user may obtain bonus points upon the purchase of merchandise and redeem the points for prizes. The program awards the bonus points to a user for making the purchases via a website. Storey's disclosed system does not disclose awarding of points for clicking on a link or selecting a feature of the webpage. As the Examiner correctly noted, Storey does not teach or even suggest a system wherein points can be earned towards entries in a sweepstakes. See Office Action, page 2. Thus, there is no motivation in Storey to modify its system to provide sweepstakes entries. Storey also does not teach or suggest a system where bonus points are provided for activities other than making purchases. Moreover, Storey does not teach or suggest a webpage that includes links, each of which has an associated point value, such that points towards entries in a sweepstakes are earned when a user clicks on the one or more of the links, as reflected in applicants' amended independent claims 1, 18 and 35 and their corresponding dependent claims. In fact, the Storey patent makes no reference to sweepstakes and does not teach or even fairly suggest a website or webpage that enables users to earn entries into one or more sweepstakes.

The CBS Sportsline reference does not teach or fairly suggest a webpage that includes links or other features, each of which has an associated point value, such that points towards entries in a sweepstakes are earned when a user clicks on the one or more of the links or selects one or more of the services, as reflected in applicants' amended independent claims 1, 18 and 35 and their corresponding dependent claims.

As neither of the cited references disclose applicants' invention as claimed in amended independent claims 1, 18 and 35, either alone or in combination, applicants' invention cannot be obvious over the Storey patent in view of the CBS Sportsline reference and vice versa. See MPEP 2142, 2143.02.

Independent claims 52 and 61 have been amended to reflect applicants' invention of a service that includes a plurality of features, wherein each of the features has an associated point value displayed in proximity to the features. Different features may have different point values and the service may include features that do not have associated point values. By clicking or otherwise accessing a feature, a user is awarded one or more points corresponding to the point value associated with the feature. The user is then given one or more entries in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.

As discussed above, Storey is directing to awarding bonus points to a user for making purchases via a website. Storey does not teach a system wherein points can be earned towards entries in a sweepstakes. Moreover, Storey does not teach or fairly suggest a service that includes one or more features, each of which has an associated point value that is displayed in proximity to the feature, such that one or more points towards one or more entries in a sweepstakes are earned when a user accesses one or more of the features, as reflected in applicants' amended independent claims 52 and 61 and their corresponding dependent claims. Similarly, the CBS Sportsline reference does not teach or fairly suggest a service that includes one or more features, each of which has an associated point value displayed in proximity to the feature, such that points towards entries in a sweepstakes are earned when a user accesses on the one or more of the features, as reflected in applicants' amended independent claims 52 and 61 and their corresponding dependent claims.

As neither of the cited references disclose applicants' invention as claimed in amended independent claims 52 and 61, either alone or in combination, applicants' invention cannot be

obvious over the Storey patent in view of the CBS Sportsline reference and vice versa. See MPEP 2142, 2143.02.

With regard to applicants' dependent claims, among other things, neither the Storey patent nor the CBS Sportsline reference, either taken alone or in combination, teach or fairly suggest: awarding points for making a webpage a user's home page, as reflected in applicants' dependent claims 6, 23, 40 displaying points associated with links, as reflected in applicants' dependent claims 9, 10, 29; displaying points earned by a user, as reflected in applicants' dependent claims 12, 26, 27, 29, 45; awarding points for a user's access or use of features or links on a third-party website, webpage or service, as reflected in applicants' dependent claims 16, 33, 34, 50, 51, 60, 70; etc.

With regard to the Examiner's statements regarding claims 3, 13, 20, 30, 37, 47, 54, 57-59, 63 and 67 (see Office Action, page 3), applicants disagree with the Examiner's assertions. Further, the mere fact that information may be stored in a database does not render it obvious to store user registration or point information as recited in these claims. Also, as it is improper to use Official Notice to comprise the principal evidence upon which a rejection is claimed, the applicants request that the Examiner provide evidence of such storage of user and point information as recited in these claims. See, MPEP 2144.03; In re Barr, 444 F.2d 588, 170 USPQ 330 (CCPA 1971).

With regard to the Examiner's statements regarding claims 4-7, 9-12, 14-15, 21-24, 26-29, 31-32, 38-46, 48-49, 51, 55-56, 64-66 and 68-69 (see Office Action, page 3), applicants disagree with the Examiner's assertions and note that the Examiner has made only cursory statements without providing any supporting evidence as the basis of these rejections. Moreover, the Examiner appears to be using improperly the information in applicants' independent claims as the basis for the rejections of these claims. Applicants request that the Examiner clarify and provide support for the rejections to these claims independent of the applicants' disclosure and claims.

With regard to the Examiner's statements regarding claims 17, 34, and 70 (see Office Action, page 3), applicants disagree with the Examiner's assertions and note that the Examiner did not provide any additional arguments regarding the additional rejection of these claims for obviousness. Thus, applicants assert that these claims are patentable for the same reasons discussed above and request that the Examiner clarify and provide support for the rejections to

these claims. As the Examiner has not provided specific reasons to support the additional obviousness rejections, the Examiner has failed to establish a prima facie case of obviousness for these claims. Ex parte Humphries, 24 USPQ 1255, 1262 (BPAI 1992).

With regard to the Examiner's statements regarding claims 8 and 25, as neither Story nor the CBS Sportlines reference disclose an email service as noted by the Examiner (see Office Action, page 3) and, given the arguments above regarding non-obviousness and patentability of applicants' claimed invention over Story and the CBS Sportsline reference, it cannot be obvious to provide email as an offered service as recited in the claims.

Conclusion

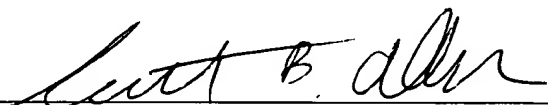
In view of the foregoing, the application is believed to be in condition for allowance, and such action is respectfully requested at the Examiner's earliest convenience. In this regard, it should be noted that Applicants' silence with respect to particular comments made in the Office Action (e.g., comments directed to various dependent claims) does not imply agreement with those comments.

If any issues remain, or if the Examiner has any further suggestions for expediting allowance of the present application, the Examiner is kindly invited to contact Scott B. Allison using the information provided below.

Respectfully submitted,

5/23/02

Date



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Amended Claims Showing Changes Relative to Previous Versions

1. (Amended) An [Internet-based] sweepstakes system, comprising:
 - (a) a host computer system hosting a [website] webpage wherein the webpage includes a plurality of links and each of the plurality of links has an associated point value;
 - [(b) a user computer system that can be connected to the host computer system and access the website;]
 - [b(c)] wherein the host computer system awards at least one point[s] to a user [of the user computer system for accessing features of the website] when the user clicks on one or more of the plurality of links; and
 - [c(d)] wherein the user is given a number of at least one entry [entries] in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.

2. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the user is automatically entered by the host system in the sweepstakes.

3. (Amended) The system of claim [2]1, wherein the host computer system stores registration information pertaining to the user.

4. (Amended) The system of claim [2]1, wherein the user receives one entry in the sweepstakes for each point the user has been awarded.

5. (Amended) The system of claim [2]1, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for [clicking on a hyperlink in] accessing a feature of the [website] webpage.

6. (Amended) The system of claim [2]1, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for making [a] the webpage [in the website] the user's home page.

7. (Amended) The system of claim [2]1, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for signing up for a service offered by the host computer system.

8. (Amended) The system of claim 7, wherein the service is email.
9. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the point value associated with at least one of the plurality of links is displayed on the webpage[number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points].
10. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the point value for each of the plurality of links is displayed on the webpage[number of awarded points is displayed on the user computer system and the displayed number of points is automatically updated when additional points are awarded].
11. (Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the host computer system stores a table containing, for each link on the webpage [website feature] for which at least one point is [points] are awarded, a number of at least one point [points] associated with the [feature] link.
12. (Amended) The system of claim 11, wherein the number of [awarded] points awarded to the user is displayed on [the] a user computer system when the user computer system accesses the webpage and the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
13. (Amended) The system of claim [2]1, further comprising a database server storing a database; the database storing point information relating to the user.
14. (Amended) The system of claim 13, wherein:
 - (a) the host computer system stores a table containing, for each [website feature] [webpage] link for which points are awarded, a number of at least one point [points] associated with the [feature]link;
 - (b) the number of awarded points is displayed on [the] a user computer system and the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated [substantially concurrently with] after an award of additional points; and
 - (c) the host computer system transmits the points awarded to the user to the database server.

15. (Amended) The system of claim 14, wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
16. (Amended) The system of claim 1, further comprising:
a third-party computer system hosting a third-party website, wherein
- (i) a [the] user computer system accessing the webpage can be connected to the third-party computer system and access the third-party website via one of the plurality of links; and
 - (ii) the host computer system awards at least one point [points] to the user for accessing the one of the plurality of links that directs the user to [features of] the third-party website.
17. (Amended) The system of claim 15, further comprising:
a third-party computer system hosting a third-party website, wherein
- (i) [the] a user computer system can be connected to the third-party computer system and access features of the third-party website; and
 - (ii) the host computer system awards points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
18. (Amended) A method of entering a user of a user computer system in a sweepstakes comprising the steps of:
- (a) [connecting the] allowing a user [computer system to a host computer] to access a webpage;
 - [(b) accessing a website on the host computer;]
 - [(c)b) awarding at least one point[s] to the user for [accessing features] clicking at least one link displayed on the webpage [of the website]; and
 - [(d)c) giving the user a number of at least one entry [entries] in [the] a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
19. (Amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of:
- [(e)d) automatically entering the user in the sweepstakes.

20. (Amended) The method of claim [19]18, further comprising the step of:
([f]d) storing registration information pertaining to the user [on the host computer].
21. (Amended) The method of claim [19]18, wherein the user receives one entry in the sweepstakes for each point awarded to the user.
22. (Amended) The method of claim [19]18, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for [clicking on a hyperlink in] accessing a feature of the [website] webpage.
23. (Amended) The method of claim [19]18, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for making the [a] webpage [in the website] the user's home page.
24. (Amended) The method of claim [19]18, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for signing up for a service offered by a [the] host system.
25. (Amended) The method of claim [19]24, wherein the service is email.
26. (Amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of:
(d[e]) displaying the number of awarded points on [the] a user computer system associated with the user, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
27. (Amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of:
([e]d) displaying the number of awarded points on [the] a user computer system associated with the user, wherein the displayed number of points is [automatically] updated when additional points are awarded.
28. (Amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising the step of:
([e]d) storing [on the host computer system] a table containing, for each link [website feature] for which at least one point is [points are] awarded, a number of at least one point [points] associated with the [feature] link.
29. (Amended) The method of claim 28, further comprising the step of:

- (e) displaying the number of [awarded] points associated with at least one link on the webpage [on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.]
30. (Amended) The method of claim [19]18, further comprising the step of:
([f]d) storing a database on a database server, wherein the database stores point information relating to the user.
31. (Amended) The method of claim [19]30, further comprising the steps of:
([g]e) storing a table [on the host computer system] containing, for each [website feature] link on the webpage for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the link [feature];
([h]f) displaying the number of awarded points on [the] user computer system associated with the user, wherein [the host computer system causes] the displayed number of points [to be] is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
([i]g) transmitting the points awarded to the user [from the host computer system] to the database server.
32. (Amended) The method of claim 31, wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
33. (Amended) The method of claim 18, further comprising the steps of:
([e]d) [connecting] allowing the user [computer system] to connect to a third-party [computer system]website via a link on the webpage; and
[(f) accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and]
([e]g) awarding at least one point [points] to the user for accessing at least one feature [features] of the third-party website.
34. (Amended) The method of claim 32, further comprising the steps of:
([h]j) connecting the user [computer system] to a third-party website [computer system]; and
[(k) accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and]

- ([l]i) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
35. (Amended) Computer code embedded in a storage medium performing the steps of:
 - (a) [connecting] allowing a user computer system to access a webpage on a host computer;
 - [(b) accessing a website on the host computer;]
 - [(c)b] awarding at least one point[s] to a user of the user computer system for clicking at least one link on the webpage [accessing features of the website]; and
 - [(d)c] giving the user a number of at least one entry [entries] in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
36. (Amended) The computer code of claim 35, further performing the step of:
 - [(e)d] automatically entering the user in the sweepstakes.
37. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]35, further performing the step of:
 - [(f)e] storing registration information pertaining to the user [on the host computer].
38. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]35, wherein the user receives one entry in the sweepstakes for each point awarded to the user.
39. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]35 wherein the user is awarded one or more points for accessing a feature of [clicking on a hyperlink in] the [website] webpage.
40. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]35, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for making [a] the webpage [in the website] the user's home page.
41. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]35, wherein the user is awarded one or more points for signing up for a service offered by the host system.
42. (Amended) The computer code of claim 41, wherein the service is email.
43. (Amended) The computer code of claim 35, further performing the step of:

- [[e]d) displaying the number of awarded points [on the user computer system], wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
44. (Amended) The computer code of claim 35, further performing the step of:
[[e]d) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is automatically updated when additional points are awarded.
45. (Amended) The computer code of claim 35, further performing the step of:
[[e]d) [storing on the host computer system a table containing, for each website feature for which points are awarded,] displaying on the webpage a number of at least one point [points] associated with at least one [the feature] link displayed on the webpage.
46. (Amended) The computer code of claim 45, further performing the step of:
(e) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
47. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]35, further performing the step of:
[[f]d) storing a database on a database server, wherein the database stores point information relating to the user.
48. (Amended) The computer code of claim [36]47, further performing the steps of:
[[g]e) storing a table [on the host computer system] containing, for each link on the webpage [website feature] for which at least one point is [points are] awarded, a number of [points] at least one point associated with the link [feature];
[[h]f) displaying the number of awarded points on the user computer system, wherein [the] a host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
[[i]g) transmitting the points awarded to the user [from the host computer system] to the database server.

49. (Amended) The computer code of claim 48, wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
50. (Amended) The computer code of claim 35, further performing the steps of:
 ([e]d) connecting the user computer system to a third-party [computer system] website;
 and
 ([f] accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and]
 ([g]e) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
51. (Amended) The computer code of claim 48, further performing the steps of:
 ([j]h) connecting the user computer system to a third-party website [computer system];
 and
 ([k] accessing a third-party website on the third-party computer system; and]
 ([l]i) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party website.
52. (Amended) A network-based sweepstakes system comprising:
 (a) a host computer system hosting a service, wherein the service includes a plurality of selectable features and each of the plurality of selectable features has an associated point value; [and]
 ([b] a user computer system that can be connected to the host computer system and access features of the service;]
 ([c]b) wherein the host computer system awards at least one point [points] to a user of the service when the user selects one or more of the plurality of selectable features [user computer system for accessing features of the service]; and
 ([d]c) wherein the user is given a number of at least one entry [entries] in a sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
53. (Amended) The system of claim 52, wherein the user is automatically entered by the host system in the sweepstakes.
54. (Amended) The system of claim [53]52, wherein the host computer system stores [registration] information pertaining to the user.

55. (Amended) The system of claim 52, wherein the number of awarded points [is displayed on the user computer system and the displayed number of points] is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
56. (Amended) The system of claim 52, wherein the host computer system stores a table containing, for each selectable feature for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the selectable feature.
57. (Amended) The system of claim [53]52, further comprising a database server storing a database; the database storing point information relating to the user.
58. (Amended) The system of claim 57, wherein:
- (a) the host computer system stores a table containing, for each selectable feature of the service for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the selectable feature of the service;
 - (b) the number of awarded points is displayed on [the] a user computer system and the host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
 - (c) the host computer system transmits the points awarded to the user to the database server.
59. (Amended) The system of claim 58, wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
60. (Amended) The system of claim 52, further comprising:
- a third-party computer system hosting a third-party service, wherein
 - [(i) the user computer system can be connected to the third-party computer system and access the third-party service; and]
 - (i[i]) the host computer system awards at least one point [points] to the user for accessing at least one feature [features] of the third-party service.

61. (Amended) A method of entering a user of a user computer system in a sweepstakes comprising the steps of:
 - (a) allowing a [connecting the] user to access a service via [computer system to] a host computer;
 - [(b) accessing a service on the host computer;]
 - [(c)b] awarding points to the user for accessing features of the service, wherein each of the features has an associated point value; and
 - [(d)c] giving the user a number of entries in the sweepstakes based on the number of points the user has been awarded.
62. (Amended) The method of claim 61, further comprising the step of:
[(e)d] automatically entering the user in the sweepstakes.
63. (Amended) The method of claim [62]61, further comprising the step of:
[(f)d] storing registration information pertaining to the user on the host computer.
64. (Amended) The method of claim 61, further comprising the step of:
[d[e]] displaying the number of awarded points on [the] a user computer system associated with the user, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
65. (Amended) The method of claim 61, further comprising the step of:
[(e)d] storing [on the host computer system] a table containing, for each [website] feature of the service for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature.
66. (Amended) The method of claim [61]65, further comprising the step of:
 - (e) displaying the number of awarded points on a [the] user computer system associated with the user, wherein the displayed number of points is updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points.
67. (Amended) The method of claim [62]61, further comprising the step of:

67. ([f]d) storing a database on a database server, wherein the database stores point information relating to the user.
68. (Amended) The method of claim 67, further comprising the steps of:
- 68. ([g]e) storing a table [on the host computer system]containing, for each feature of the service for which points are awarded, a number of points associated with the feature;
 - 68. ([h]f) displaying the number of awarded points on [the] a user computer system associated with the user, wherein [the] a host computer system causes the displayed number of points to be updated substantially concurrently with an award of additional points; and
 - 68. ([i]g) transmitting the points awarded to the user from the host computer system to the database server.
69. (Amended) The method of claim 68, wherein the points are transmitted to the database server asynchronously.
- 70 (Amended) The method of claim 68, further comprising the steps of:
- 70. ([j]h) connecting the user computer system to a third-party service[computer system];
and
 - 70. [(k)] accessing a third-party service on the third-party computer system; and]
 - 70. ([l]i) awarding points to the user for accessing features of the third-party service.